

GUN

CONTROL

Exploring the Issues

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medications

video games

bullying

media

GUN CONTROL

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ABSTRACT

There are compelling facts substantiating that gun control is not the real issue behind mass shootings. Evidence fails to support a correlation suggesting that gun laws result in a decreased amount of mass shootings. Those who are willing to murder already demonstrate a disregard for human life and the laws associated with a balanced society. Although proponents of more gun control quickly advocate that guns are the reason behind increased mass killings, other connections must be considered. Links between violent killings and medications and mental illness are appearing to be more evident. In addition, research suggests that connections between mass shootings and violent video games are of paramount concern. Compelling connections also exist between bullying and violent reactions. Perhaps more telling are the connections between media saturation of one event fueling another killer's motives. Laws cannot regulate responses to emotions, mental illnesses, or past events that foster the concepts and motivations of a killer. Emotionally unsound people who wish to find weapons will find weapons through any means necessary. Further gun regulation only creates avenues for increased illegal weapon sales, which establishes further instability. However, the necessity to balance the right to bear arms and the need to be protected should be thoroughly explored.

310 million non-military guns in America



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here are compelling facts substantiating that gun control is not the real issue that needs to be under public scrutiny. Each time an incident occurs, such as the Sandy Hook Elementary

School tragedy, there is a flurry of media hype using the horrific event to push for more gun control. These events stir questions about America's love for guns, and the right to own them, guns linked to other crimes, gun-free zones, and many others. Unfortunately, none of these questions are easily answered. Gun ownership in America is no casual thing. It is estimated that there are 310 million non-military guns in America. Specifically, there are 114 million handguns, 110 million rifles, and 86 million shotguns (Krouse, 2012). That amounts to 90 guns for every 100 people in America.

Proponents of more gun control quickly advocate that guns are the reason there are more killings, especially mass shootings. The facts do not bear that out. **Table 1** is taken from the Congressional Research Service compilation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual Uniform Crime Report. According to this report, firearm-related murders actually decreased from 1993 to 2011 (Krouse, 2012).

Table 1: Estimated Murder Rates and Firearm, 1993-2011

Year	Estimated Murder Victims	Rate per 100,000 of the Population	Estimated Firearms-Related Murder Victims	Rate per 100,000 of the Population
1993	24,526	9.5	17,073	6.6
1994	23,326	9.0	16,333	6.3
1995	21,606	8.2	14,727	5.6
1996	19,645	7.4	13,261	5.0
1997	18,208	6.8	12,335	4.6
1998	16,974	6.3	11,006	4.1
1999	15,522	5.7	10,117	3.7
2000	15,586	5.5	10,203	3.6
2001	16,037	5.6	10,139	3.6
2002	16,229	5.6	10,841	3.8
2003	16,528	5.7	11,037	3.8
2004	16,148	5.5	10,665	3.6
2005	16,740	5.6	11,363	3.8
2006	17,309	5.8	11,731	3.9
2007	17,128	5.7	11,631	3.9
2008	16,645	5.4	11,029	3.6
2009	15,399	5.0	10,301	3.4
2010	14,722	4.8	9,812	3.2
2011	14,612	4.7	9,903	3.2



Gun-free zones offer a safe haven for mass murderers

Regardless of the causal factors of murder and the correlation, or lack thereof, with guns, and upon consideration of this documented and factual decline in the murder rate, it becomes obvious there is an agenda being pushed forward.

First, there is some evidence correlating medications and violent killings. According to Phil Chalmers, author of *Inside the Mind of a Teen Killer*, “there are many crimes connected to prescription drugs, whether prescribed to the violent offender or used for nonmedical purposes” (Chalmers, 2009). The book, *Columbine*, explains the medication concerns of Eric Harris prior to the shootings. According to Dave Cullen, Eric complained about his medication to his doctor indicating the medication was not doing enough. However, according to Cullen, “He told a different story in his journal” (Cullen, 2009). Cullen said, “Dr. Albert wanted to medicate him to eradicate bad thoughts and quell anger, he wrote. That was craziness. He would not accept the human assembly line” (Cullen, 2009). Although correlations exist between medications and violent killings, it’s questionable if the cause is the medication or the underlying psychological condition, or a combination of both.

Secondly, there is an enormous amount of research indicating that the violent video games being produced today have a direct correlation to violent crimes. Jordyn McGinnity discusses this with Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, U.S. Army (Ret.), one of the world’s leading experts on crimes of this nature (McGinnity, 2012). Grossman has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for such works as, *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie and Video Game Violence*. To learn more about the influence of video games on our children, visit Col. Grossman’s website at www.killology.org/bio.htm. “Media violence causes violence in our society,” Grossman said. “All school killers have had one thing in common. They all dropped out of life and immersed themselves in a culture of violence, especially video games” (McGinnity, 2012). This reasoning was substantiated in 1992, when the Journal of the American Medical Association released a document advising that television violence was a causal factor in homicides committed annually (McGinnity, 2012).

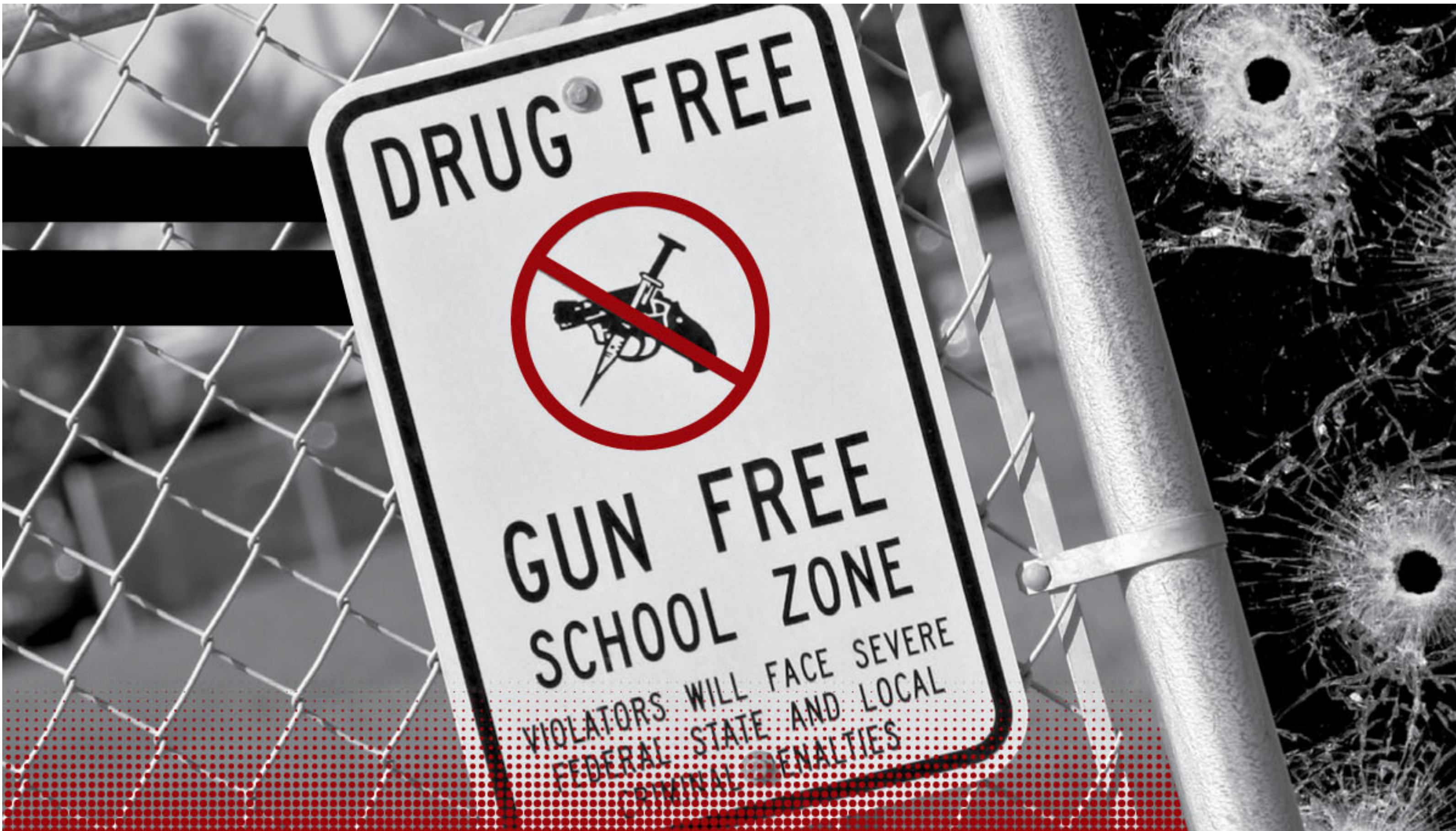
A commonality between teen shooters is the use of violent video games. One video game in particular was shared in common by two school shooters, Eric Harris of Columbine and Luke Woodham of Mississippi, which “...allows you to experience the

act of killing in a very realistic manner. This game is infamous for its extreme depiction of violence, gore, and satanic imagery” (Chalmers, 2009). Eric Harris hacked into the software creating his own characters and adventures (Cullen, 2009).

A much stronger correlation occurred in 1990. At that time, Congress passed the Gun-Free School Zone Act of 1990. This law outlawed any firearm, even those carried by licensed individuals, from entering any school zone including college campuses. Texas Congressman Steve Stockman calls Gun-Free School Zones a “deadly experiment that must end” (Nicholson, 2013). **Chart 1** shows the number of Mass Murders/Attempted Murders by decade in these “gun-free zones.” Evaluating these by decade lends the appearance of a decline. However, as illustrated in **Chart 2**, the same data expressed by year shows a rise in shootings in “gun-free zones.”

Gun-free zones offer a safe haven for mass murderers. “Guns are already banned in schools. That is why the shootings happen in schools. A school is a ‘helpless-victim zone,’” says Richard Mack, a former Arizona sheriff. “Preventing any adult at a school from having access to a firearm eliminates any chance the killer can be stopped in time to prevent a rampage” (Fund, 2012). This was further expounded upon by John Lott on *National Public Radio*. Lott is author of *More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws*. Lott stated, “Essentially all of the multiple victim public shootings in the United States, and all the ones in Europe, have one factor in common—that is, they keep occurring where guns are banned” (Lott, 2012). In the same interview, Lott goes on to use the Colorado movie theater shooting as an example. “You had seven movie theaters showing the Batman movie within a 20-minute drive of the killer’s apartment. One of those seven movie theaters posted a ban on concealed handguns. The killer didn’t go to the movie theater that was closest to his home. There was one that was 1.3 miles away. He didn’t go to the largest one.

90 guns for every
100 people in America



In fact, one advertises itself quite openly as having the largest auditorium in the state of Colorado. Instead, the one he picked was the one that banned concealed handguns” (Lott, 2012).

The venues and methods of violence are as random as the state laws to deter the violence. Emotional instability, mental illness, emptiness, and depression are all commonalities in these killings. Laws cannot regulate responses to emotions, mental illnesses, or historical events that foster the concepts and motivations of a killer. However, research aimed at healing our mentally ill citizens, curtailing the activities that foster aggressive behavior, and understanding the activities which fuel and shape their decisions are within our control. Furthermore, providing paths for those individuals to receive answers and preventative assistance is essential to the protection of our country.

In 2007, CBS’ *48 Hours* interviewed Jamie Rouse, shooter of the Richland High School shooting in which two people were killed and one was wounded. During the interview, Rouse explains his emotions and influences. “He now says the music and violent images were filling an emptiness inside—and their message made him feel powerful. “I guess for so long I’d felt helpless and weak, and with violence, you know, you have control,” says Rouse “I’m not saying that it’s music made me did what I did, because ultimately, it was my choice. But it helped shape who I was”” (Leuing, 2007). Rouse also mentions that bullying played a role in the development of his feelings of emptiness (Leuing, 2007).

His words of bullying echo those of Santana High School shooter Charles “Andy” Williams, who killed two people and wounded 11 others. As stated in an interview with *Primetime*, Williams said, “He started having these flashes and thinking of taking a gun to school,” said Scott. “If he did that then people would know that he was really tough and really strong and that he could fight for himself and fend for himself and people would leave him alone.” (Sawyer, 2006)

Chart 1 - Mass Murders / Attempted Murders in “Gun-Free Zones” By Decade

Since Passage of the Gun-Free School Zone Act in 1990

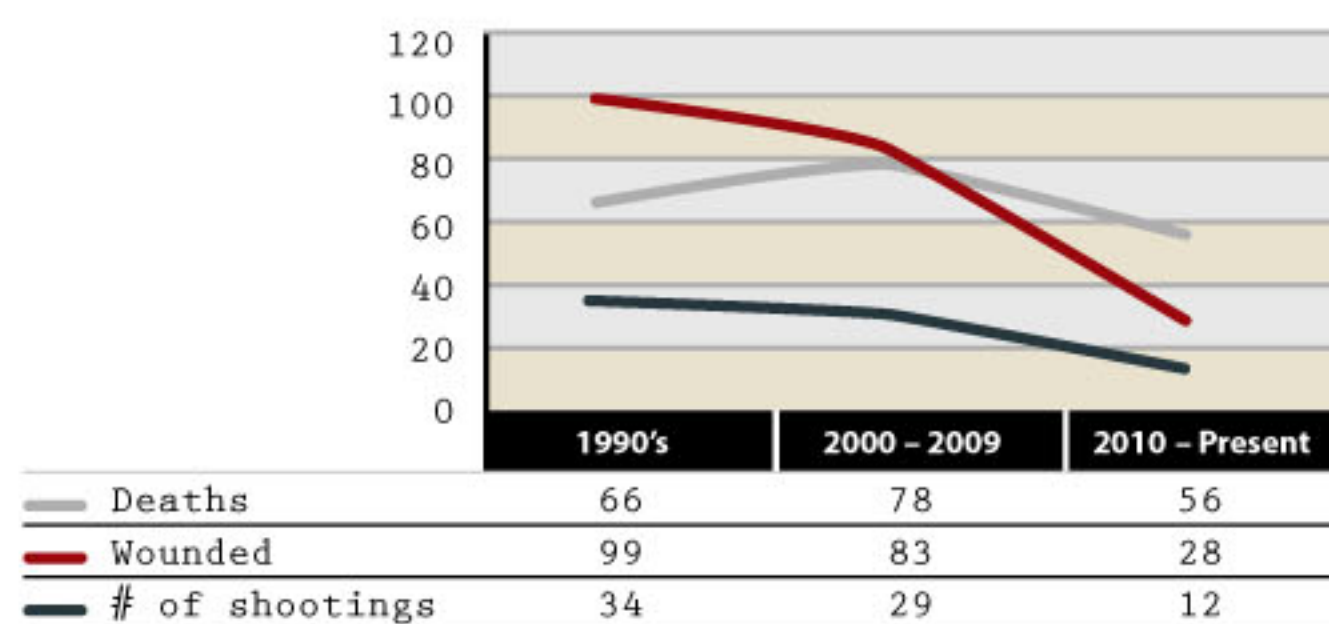
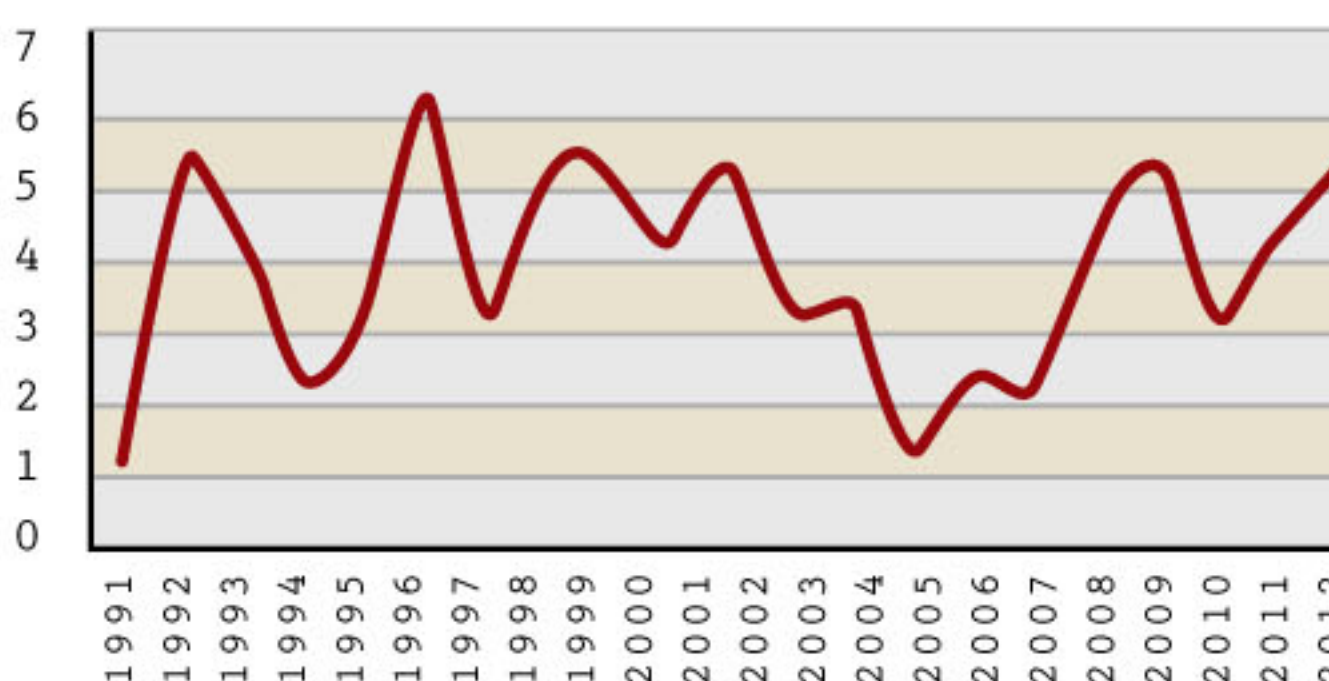


Chart 2 - Mass Murders / Attempted Murders in “Gun-Free Zones” By Year

Since Passage of the Gun-Free School Zone Act in 1990



Note: These charts are not intended to be all inclusive, rather representative (Klein, 2012).

Has history demonstrated that when emotionally wounded people seek solutions for their emptiness, weakness, and lack of control, while being influenced by violent images, that violence becomes the immediate option? When a shooter has been exposed to violence through video games, do they fall back to that knowledge as the immediate method? Following the Columbine tragedy, the FBI and the Secret Service published reports demonstrating school shooters did not fit into a specific profile, and only a quarter of the school shooters had enjoyed video games (Cullen, 2009).

Public outcry for video games and video regulations have been deafeningly quiet. Yet some of these videos and video games allow our children to experience killing over and over again. Some are so real that you must keep a tight grip on the game controls until your victim has stopped breathing in order to get game credit for their death. Additionally, amidst the public outcry to control weapons, there is little to no outcry to allow those we entrust to educate our children to have the ability to also protect them from killers.

These arguments do not discredit the issues addressed by those who believe in stronger gun control, all of which must also be considered in our analysis. For example, in a report on gun ownership in America published by the National Institute of Justice, approximately 60% of gun acquisitions that involved a federal firearms license enhancement were subject to federal regulations on matters such as out-of-state sales, criminal history checks, and bookkeeping. The other 40% of gun acquisitions amounted to 200 million per year, which were off-the-books transfers in some secondary market (Cook, Ludwig, 1997). By all accounts, this is an area that needs better policing.

Background checks in connection with gun ownership are another issue demanding evaluation. According to the *Congressional Research Document*, "Gun Control Legislation," background checks are one of the recurring gun control issues that have generated congressional interest (Krouse, 2012). Specifically, interest in background checks have included "screening firearms background check applicants against terrorist watch lists" and "requiring background checks for private firearms transfers at gun shows" (Krouse, 2012). Once a gun owner passes the background check, the owner must be held accountable and responsible for proper use and care of the weapon. According to Phil Chalmers, "It's time to start holding gun owners accountable if they do not properly guard their weapons. If people want the right to own a deadly weapon, they must also be held legally responsible for proper storage of their firearms" (Chalmers, 2009).

Finally, why is it that our society is so familiar with names like Adam Lanza, Ted Kaczynski, and Timothy McVeigh? McVeigh's trial for the Oklahoma City bombing was prominently broadcast in the Denver region, where Columbine shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold lived (Cullen, 2009). Before shooting the students

of Columbine, "Eric would brag about topping McVeigh in his journal" (Cullen, 2009). Could it be that these sick individuals understand that our media will make them forever infamous, even if for heinous crimes? Maybe what we need our government to take away is the news media's ability to broadcast the name of any suspected mass murderer. Would that draw an outcry of their first amendment rights being infringed upon, just as gun control infringes on other's second amendment rights?

Essentially, many factors impact the mind of a shooter; factors that go beyond gun control laws. Chalmers reports that every teen killer and serial killer he interviewed told him "nothing could have prevented them from getting a weapon, regardless of what kinds of laws were imposed" (Chalmers 2009). Perhaps it's time we focus on how to derail the killers' mindsets instead of derailing the public's right to bear arms. Perhaps it's time to examine all concerns and identify legitimate solutions that balance the public's right to bear arms and the ability to be protected.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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In 1993, 17,073 firearms-related murders

In 2011, there were 9,903

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